

DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
ADMINISTRATOR'S MEMO SERIES

NOTICE 04-19

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*PROGRAM CATEGORIES:

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<input type="checkbox"/> CC	<input type="checkbox"/> FL	<input type="checkbox"/> NA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> W-2
<input type="checkbox"/> CS	<input type="checkbox"/> IT	<input type="checkbox"/> RA	<input type="checkbox"/> WIA
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To: Wisconsin Works (W-2) Agency Directors

From: Bill Clingan /s/
Division Administrator

RE: W-2 Up-front Workforce Attachment Process

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to lay out the core functions that agencies are expected to perform as part of the provision of up-front workforce attachment services in the Wisconsin Works (W-2) program. By communicating our expectations in this manner, it is the Department's goal to more rapidly move individuals in the direction of employment through the provision of quality up-front services based on each job seeker's assessed strengths and needs.

BACKGROUND

Currently, there are functions that must be completed up-front with each W-2 applicant to meet basic W-2 policy requirements, such as accepting and processing the W-2 application, determining program eligibility, performing an informal assessment, and making appropriate placements on the W-2 ladder. Beyond those basic functions, W-2 agencies manage their up-front services in a variety of ways that are driven by programmatic resources, agency philosophy, and local economic conditions.

Current statewide data tells us that a significant portion of our W-2 caseload has a recent work history. Of those newly entering the W-2 program during the first quarter of 2004 (i.e., no prior participation in W-2), 38% of the CMS placements and 30% of the full-time CSJ placements had wages in the fourth quarter of 2003. An even greater percentage of these individuals had wages in the first, second, and third quarters of 2003. Of those returning to W-2 in the first

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AS--Apprenticeship Standards	FM--Financial Management Requirements	ML--Migrant Labor	TR--Transportation
CC--Child Care	FL--Foreign Labor Certification	NA--Native American Services	W-2--Wisconsin Works
CS--Child Support	IT--IT Systems	RA--Refugee Assistance	WIA--Workforce Investment Act
CF--Children First	JC--Job Center	TC--Tax Credit Programs	
		TA--Trade Assistance	

quarter of 2004 (i.e., had participated in W-2 at some point in the past), 55% of the CMS placements and 42% of the full-time CSJ placements had wages in the fourth quarter of 2003. This data suggests that opportunities exist to move more job seekers into employment sooner through more intensive up-front services and more thoughtful decisions about their first paid placement.

In light of that information, we are taking steps to strengthen and align up-front services to the extent possible across the state by providing agencies with the necessary guidelines and technical assistance. Agencies retain the flexibility to determine who provides these services. The service provider may be a W-2 staff person, a sub-contracted agency, a workforce development professional housed in the Job Center, or any combination of these.

This memo does not replace or supercede any current W-2 policies. Agencies must continue to follow all W-2 policies related to the W-2 application and eligibility determination process. Additional information will follow this memo that describes the training and technical assistance that will be available to agencies.

EARLY WORKFORCE ATTACHMENT

W-2 is first and foremost an employment program, and our customers are job seekers. Through the application process, the job seeker forms a partnership with the W-2 agency to move in the direction of employment as quickly as possible through a combination of case management activities and structured job search. If conducted with a sense of urgency, the up-front process should lead many job seekers to employment before a cash placement is needed, or shortly thereafter.

A successful model requires that where multiple staff share service responsibilities for a job seeker (e.g., Resource Specialists, FEPs, Job Developers, work shop presenters, job center staff, etc.), the staff share information and consult regularly about that individual. This reduces duplication of effort across program roles, it ensures customized case management services, and ultimately it should result in better and more rapid employment matches.

UP-FRONT CORE FUNCTIONS

Employability Screening

Employability screening entails all of the activities that agencies conduct following submittal of a W-2 application to assess the job seeker's service needs and their readiness to participate in up-front job search activities.

As part of the employability screening, information should be gathered about job seekers':

- ◆ Current employment goals
- ◆ Work history
- ◆ Recent job search efforts
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Job skills (including life skills that are transferable to a job)
- ◆ Interests and Abilities
- ◆ Personal conditions affecting employment
- ◆ Family related needs
- ◆ Supportive service needs
- ◆ Child Support status

The information gathered should be comprehensive enough to allow the agency to make a determination of whether assignment to up-front job search is appropriate as laid out in Section 5.1.2 of the W-2 Manual. This information should also be shared among the providers who may be coming in contact with the job seeker, including FEPs, Job Developers and any other workforce development professionals who will be providing services.

Assisting with Service Needs and Options

As the W-2 application process continues, the agency must assist the job seeker in determining which programs or services are likely to support their efforts to obtain employment and self-sufficiency, including:

- ◆ Job search and career exploration resources available in the Job Center and online. Examples of online resources include:
 - WISCareers- http://wiscareers.wisc.edu/C_ClientHome/home.asp
 - JobNet - <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/jobnet/mapwi.htm>
 - Wisconsinjobnetwork.com <http://www.wisconsinjobnetwork.com>
- ◆ Other Job Center partner programs including Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs and locally sponsored work program initiatives.
- ◆ For those who communicate an intense interest in a post-secondary education or training program, the case manager should counsel the individual on the option of applying for and using financial aid and other work supports (Food Stamps, child care, Job Access Loans, etc.) to complete the training program.

Supportive service needs must be identified and appropriate referrals are to be made during the up-front process. By assisting with supportive services up-front, the agency is helping the job seeker prepare for employment. The service needs checklist in Section 5.1.1.1 of the W-2 Manual is a good point of reference for this.

Conducting Career Planning and Intensive Job Search Activities

Agencies must provide a combination of services geared towards assessment of the job seekers' career interests, preparation for job search, and structured/supervised contacts with employers.

Agencies should be innovative in their approach to services. Whenever possible, agencies should use a mix of individual assignments and group activities tailored to the needs of the job seeker. Activities may include:

1. Career Planning/Counseling

- Career assessment: may include areas such as career interest inventories, aptitude tests, basic skill achievement tests and career values.
- Educational needs assessment: required by statute and W-2 policy to be completed as part of the application process.
- Review of local labor market information and local training opportunities.
- Career exploration/Job Shadowing.
- Touch-base meetings to provide job seeker with constructive feed back on progress.

2. Individual and Group Job Search

Activity is tailored to needs of individual and includes structured and supervised job search. This activity should also include a job club to give job seekers an opportunity to

discuss successes and difficulties encountered during daily job search, share job leads and provide group support.

3. Job Readiness/Motivational Activities

Help prepare job seeker for work by learning general workplace attitudes, expectations and behaviors. Activities build self-esteem and increase self-confidence.

4. Job Seeking Skills Training

To include topics such as resume development, interviewing techniques, personal grooming/dressing, networking skills and how to identify jobs available in the community.

5. Job Survival/Retention

To cover topics such as attendance, conflict management, team work, problem solving, diversity, employee rights and career advancement.

Some or all of these activities may be assigned as part of the up-front job search requirements laid out in Section 5.1.2 of the W-2 Manual and may continue after an individual is placed in W-2. During the **first two weeks after placement** in a CSJ or W-2 T, Wisconsin state statutes permit the assignment of these types of activities for up to 40 hours per week. Total assigned hours may not exceed 40 hours per week. These types of activities are also appropriate for individuals placed in CMS.

Employability Planning

Employability planning is a dynamic process that uses the local labor market forecast in tandem with the job seeker's career and educational assessments to produce a realistic plan for employment.

W-2 policy requires that an initial Employability Plan (EP) be developed before assigning a job seeker to up-front job search. At a minimum, this initial EP should lay out the assigned activities, the activity schedule, and locations. As more information is gathered through the career planning and intensive job search process, the EP should be adjusted and refined to reflect information that has been gathered. By the end of the career planning and intensive job search process, the plan should include both long-term and short-term goals with action steps/objectives and the appropriate combination of services and training needed to achieve each goal.

While the long-term employment goals are not the initial focus of the W-2 program, it is still important to lay them out in the EP, in that they:

- ◆ Are a guide for the W-2 job developer and the job seeker as they consider which job sectors to focus on in the job search process.
- ◆ Serve as a blue print for the job seeker to follow in making future career and life decisions.

While the EP will include a long-term career plan, the activities assigned in the EP continue to be focused on steps to achieve the short-term employment goal.

Job Development

Job development is a key component of the up-front workforce attachment process and should continue on throughout the job seeker's stay in the W-2 program. A successful model requires that job developers:

1. Have a basic knowledge of each job seeker's interests, skills, and abilities in order to solicit job openings, market job seekers to employers, and secure job interviews;
2. Look for ways to make and maintain contacts in a wide variety of industries and devote time to learning about local business trends; and
3. Work with employers to determine their requirements for an employee (special training, skills and work experience, work hours, etc.) so that appropriate matches can be made. Job skills training for a specific job may be part of the up-front career planning and intensive job search activities provided that there is a likelihood that the job match will be successful.

Agencies should capitalize on local economic initiatives to maximize job development opportunities.

W-2 Placement

The W-2 placement decision should be based on the information gathered through the employability screening and the progress the job seeker has made while assigned to career planning and intensive job search activities. For those job seekers placed in a CSJ or W-2 T, agencies must consider whether it's appropriate to have the individual continue to participate in career planning and intensive job activities for up to 40 hours per week during the first two weeks after placement. A combination of these activities along with some hours of work experience or other barrier mitigation services may also be appropriate. The FEP should base this determination on progress that has been made by the job seeker thus far. Those who are determined to be less able to obtain employment should be assigned more work experience hours or other barrier mitigation services. Those who are determined to be more employable should have most or all of their time invested in the career planning and job search activities.

Job Retention

Job seekers who meet financial and non-financial eligibility for W-2 and are successful in obtaining employment during the up-front workforce attachment process must be offered services through the appropriate case management placement: CMU for those who are not placed in a cash placement and CMF for those who transition from a cash placement into employment. Examples of case management services for these placements are included in 7.1.2 and 7.1.3 of the W-2 Manual. Based on the needs and the requests of the individual, services should range from touch-base meetings to evaluate job status and needed supports to a more intensive approach, including job survival/retention services, adult basic education, and career advancement services.

Special Needs/Circumstances

Where severe barriers or service needs present themselves during the up-front process, the FEP must immediately assign the individual to appropriate placement and activities (e.g., CMC, W-2 T, 18&19 year old with no HSD or GED).

For those job seekers who present themselves with minimal or an easily corrected set of employment barriers, the agency must ensure that necessary accommodations are in place to facilitate a successful job search. In addition, the agency should attempt to determine whether an individual who is not successfully completing assigned job search has undetected barriers.

Where a special need relates to a financial crisis such as homelessness, the agency should not automatically preclude this individual from the up-front process. Agencies should be creative in offering the appropriate combination of assistance and services. For example, an emergency

payment or Job Access Loan could be used to meet an immediate financial need in combination with assignment to up-front career planning and intensive job search activities. However, agencies must build time into the job seeker's EP to address special circumstances, such as search for permanent housing.

CONTACT: DWS Regional Offices